

Coming back by train...

Wednesday, 29 June 2011

So I decided I now hate air travel so much I'd return from the South of France by train instead.

These days you need to reach airports at least two hours before takeoff - which usually means an hour in a car getting there - stand for an hour in the queue at check in - then an hour at security and all that (on the last flight back from Tunisia they spent fifteen minutes going through my hand luggage and confiscated two rolls of Sellotape as though I was a terrorist). The flight is always delayed by an hour. Then it's cramped, uncomfortable, shit food, warm drink - two hours getting off; going through immigration and customs; waiting for luggage (if they haven't lost it) and an hour into town to your hotel. An entire day unpleasantly wasted. Stress and exhaustion.

So I bought my tickets online (dead cheap) but had to collect them the day before from Nice station.

Got there early (7.30) to beat the queue - disaster - bomb scare - entire station closed down. Sat having a coffee at the cafe opposite, watching the hysteria. Station reopens (no bomb naturally) at 9. Fortunately I'm first in the enormous queue (300 people) and get my tickets within minutes.

Next morning I head back to the station. Get there a few minutes ahead of departure; time for a Cappuccino. Very comfortable seats - though pretty full, I managed to be next to a vacant one. They apologized for the slight delay; will make it up but are distraught to say they may be reaching Paris 5 minutes behind schedule. On the train, after looking at the gorgeous Provencal countryside and reading that morning's UK papers, I settle down to rewatch Part One of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows on my laptop before the release of Part Two. Still excellent; again ludicrously upset by Dobby's death.

I do notice that voyagers seem to carry far too much luggage. A lesson to be learned; take half what you think you'll need - and you'll only use half of that.

Five hours later I'm in Paris. Grab a cab to the other station. Onto Eurostar - likewise packed (what recession?). Two hours through the tunnel. Home by 7pm. About the same time a flight would have got me here, with far less hassle, strain and annoyance.

Much better way to travel - and only 65 Euros. Plus cab fares, of course.

And best of all; no recycled fart and germs in the lungs for 2 ghastly hours.